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Abstract

I am struck by how Naipaul draws on literary reference, not only to confirm, but even to valorize, place, and the experience of place, in his own writing. So the Langham Hotel, where the young Naipaul worked as a freelance for the BBC Caribbean Service, is significant because it features in 'at least one Sherlock Holmes story'.¹ In *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987) there is an affinity between the textual experience of time and place as meaningful, and (from its position as canonical writing), Middle English Arthurian literature's power to confirm that experience. The writer turns, for validation of his own feelings, to a description of winter in the fourteenth-century poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, commenting explicitly on this as indication that he is 'in tune with the landscape'.² Amesbury is important because it is to a convent there that Guinevere retires after the Last Battle, in which Arthur is killed, and we are reminded that it is only some twenty miles from Camelot, 'at Winchester' (p. 50). (The identification of the place by its names across time is from Thomas Malory's fifteenth-century *Morte Darthur*.³)

CATHERINE BATT

Post-Colonial London, By Way of Medieval Romance: V.S. Naipaul's *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*

I am struck by how Naipaul draws on literary reference, not only to confirm, but even to valorize, place, and the experience of place, in his own writing. So the Langham Hotel, where the young Naipaul worked as a freelance for the BBC Caribbean Service, is significant because it features in 'at least one Sherlock Holmes story'.¹ In *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987) there is an affinity between the textual experience of time and place as meaningful, and (from its position as canonical writing), Middle English Arthurian literature's power to confirm that experience. The writer turns, for validation of his own feelings, to a description of winter in the fourteenth-century poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, commenting explicitly on this as indication that he is 'in tune with the landscape'.² Amesbury is important because it is to a convent there that Guinevere retires after the Last Battle, in which Arthur is killed, and we are reminded that it is only some twenty miles from Camelot, 'at Winchester' (p. 50). (The identification of the place by its names across time is from Thomas Malory's fifteenth-century *Morte Darthur*.³)

By contrast, Naipaul's 1962 novella, *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, presents us with a (fragmented) cityscape and makes use of romance motif, but avoids the later texts' synchrony of literary and physical spaces (although I appreciate the potential for ambivalence in the interpretation of such synchrony: is Naipaul there working in the interests of, or undermining the notion of, tradition?⁴). I want to look here at the novella's reticence about defining London space, its assumptions and evasions, and also at its oblique acknowledgement and uses of the literary space medieval romance maps out, and to suggest how they might in fact intersect within two frames: first, the diverse cultural constructions and displacements of Englishness (as vexed and relative a term as is that of the 'city'); and second, Naipaul's self-consciousness with regard to a literary tradition in English, keeping in mind the vexedness too of what constitutes a 'tradition': Simon Gikandi, in his recent study, *Maps of Englishness*, points out 'the mutual imbrication of both the colonizer and the colonized' in the

cultural spaces effected by the condition of post-coloniality.⁵ It is in this context of the negotiations of literary cartographies that I want to suggest the sideways presentation of London and the echoes of legend alike as projections of a post-colonial disillusion, but also of literary reinscription which, in the field of Arthurian legend, I want to argue, meet up with a late-medieval cultural reinscription, to suggest a more precise ideological position for *Mr Stone* as a form of cultural investigation.

Naipaul has explained in an interview that after *A House for Mr Biswas*, *Mr Stone* represented his return to writing: 'I had to write another book, to prove to myself that I could write, that it wasn't all over, that one had a talent.'⁶ Complementarily, John Steinbeck explains of his reworking of Malory (1958/9) how the *Morte Darthur* was his entry into productive literacy, after he had experienced 'the appalled agony of trying to learn to read': 'I stared at the black print with hatred, and then, gradually, the pages opened and let me in.'⁷ Each writer draws something different from associating the Arthurian with literary articulacy. Steinbeck's unfinished book (heavily dependent on Malory) suggests that his siting himself as reader makes him idiosyncratically reiterate rather than rewrite Malory: Steinbeck stands as a contrast to Naipaul, for whom the Arthurian implicitly provides a residual continuity which facilitates re-entry into writing. I want more closely to analyse the obliqueness of Naipaul's engagement with an arguably illusory, but nonetheless (or perhaps consequentially) culturally weighty myth, to see how it dovetails with other 'placings', literary and social, in the novel.

Richard Stone, in his early sixties, and approaching the end of an undistinguished if comfortable career as an archivist in a large corporation, Excal – the word itself is ripe for Arthurian elaboration, as well as suggesting a world grown cold – marries a widow, Mrs Springer, after a brief courtship, apparently to stave off the depredations of a lonely old age: but soon afterwards, growing anxiety about the change in circumstances and routine that retirement will entail, which includes a fear of emasculation grounded in misogyny, a fear brought home to him by his experiences on a Cornish holiday, lead him to draft a plan for the mutual support of old men retired from the corporation. (Whether Excal has employed women for too short a time for them to feature as pensioners is not specified.) This scheme is enthusiastically taken up by the company, and developed by a dynamic young man in Public Relations, Bill Whympier, who gives the project its Arthurian trappings and gloss. According to the scheme, the former employees make up a Round Table of Knights Companion, their aim to offer succour to their fellows. Whympier finally 'betrays' Stone by making his niece pregnant and leaving for a job in another company.

There is about Stone an air of displacement in relation to the larger city he inhabits, and we view both London and its cultures through the lens of his own apparent diffidence towards both. It is as if Naipaul here mimics the English novel as he has elsewhere defined it, as not attending to the

importance and nature of the city.⁸ But *Mr Stone* itself presents a tension (precisely encoded as English reticence) between what remains unarticulated about the pressures of city and history, and a narrative acknowledgement of what Elizabeth Grosz terms the 'interface' between body and city, a 'mutually defining' relation, with the city a 'fundamentally disunified series of systems and interconnections' in relation to which the individual is positioned in so many 'temporary alignments'.⁹ So London is primarily conceptualized as an agglomeration of peripheral districts, distinguished largely (though not uniquely) by name alone: Muswell Hill, Camden Town, Hampstead, Brixton, Streatham. Whympers's home, characteristically, straddles two locations: 'in Kilburn, on that side of the High Road which gave him a Hampstead telephone number' (p. 87).¹⁰ Until the novel's conclusion, which is the point at which we come nearest to locating Stone's own home, a strangely indeterminate centre seems rather to hold these places apart than to draw them together. Richard Stone's sister, Olive, has for years been moving ever further from the centre of the city, a displacement figured as a frightened retreat, a fear of violation of private spaces (p. 22), a movement that Naipaul's Caribbean politician-refugee-narrator of *The Mimic Men* (1967) will re-enact; he will ultimately adopt a similarly anonymous existence, although the later novel openly states hopes of the city, and the trajectory from centre to margin is explicitly articulated as consequential upon a cultural and metropolitan disillusion.¹¹

David Dabydeen has suggested, of a later era and area of post-colonial London, that the different ethnic communities make for groupings of discrete cells that do not interconnect:¹² Stone's city is, largely, both discrete and anonymous. This propensity towards the discrete is of a piece with the presentation of 'Englishness' as so many forms of confining and confined households manifesting slightly different aspects of an enclosed and eccentric (rather than London-centred) conservatism. The respectable Tomlinsons are the arbiters of English middle-class good taste, awkward accommodators of continental ways (they serve Beaujolais rationed in liqueur glasses, and Mr Tomlinson dutifully bows to highbrow consensus in considering the French gangster movie as art film), and the Stones take their cultural cues from them, but their home has no specific London location: the effect is of a certain parochialism and, ultimately, a denial of cultural accountability in a domestic world detached from its immediate environment. Stone's naive appropriations of popular culture in the face of situations outside his usual routine – as when he offers policemen cups of tea because he understands from films that this is what one does (p. 31)¹³ – similarly suggest awkward cultural accommodations rather than initiative.

Stone's own house, with its bric-à-brac of empire (Mrs Springer's tiger skin, a relic of her first marriage, is literally underfoot), and its semi-public areas selectively redecorated only when the upturn in Stone's professional life would seem to require it, more explicitly signals domestic space as metaphor for post-imperial metropolis. The grotesquerie of Stone's

frustrated attempt, at the beginning of the novel, to entice a troublesome black cat up the stairs and into the bathroom by means of cheese-cubes, where it was to have encountered Mr Stone armed with a poker – ‘The poker was not for attack but self-defence’ (p. 6) – carries sinister connotations in the context of the novel’s undercurrent of a violence which is metaphorized or linguistic rather than physically realized. This displacement of social and conceptual issues onto material artefacts invites us to interpret figuratively the comically deliberate sequencing of red, white and blue cushions with which Stone’s housekeeper improvises a bed for Margaret on her first night as Stone’s wife, and to invoke it contrastively with the detail, towards the end of the novel, of estate agents’ signs sprouting, joyously and almost organically, along Stone’s road, as the area undergoes rapid social change: ‘Bright “To Let” and “For Sale” notices in red, white and black appeared with growing frequency amid the green of hedges’ (p. 111).

Whymper’s quarters, by contrast with Stone’s home, are rather more casual, and suggest a different accommodation of post-imperial spaces, with its (to the Stones) intrusive-sounding tenants, and Whymper’s endorsement of European ‘style’. His meals (p. 87) certainly owe more to an experimental Fanny Cradock-ish ‘internationalism’ than to personal familiarity with continental culture: no self-respecting mainland European would serve red peppers raw. These domestic spaces have their own decorum. In one episode, for example, to act Shylock with a pronounced Jewish accent as part of an evening’s entertainment is silently castigated (p. 41), but typically the guest to whom it is intimated such a performance would give most offence is not himself dignified with a name: what concern or indifference an outraged sense of propriety may ultimately mask is left unclear.

If discrete architectural spaces offer different figurations of, and particular social rules for, a largely self-consciously unaccountable post-war white middle-class London society (there are few references to race in the book), London’s topographical centre, where the characters apparently do little more spectacular than cross a street or wait for traffic to clear, is marked by anonymity of both person and space.¹⁴ The open streets countenance transgressions of normally observed proprieties. It is in the streets (on one memorable occasion at an Oxford Circus traffic island) that Bill Whymper most openly articulates his misogyny and his racism (in which Stone colludes), though no open confrontation with the targets of Whymper’s racial hatred is recorded: ‘There were days when the sight of black men on the London streets drove him to fury; he spent the whole of one lunchtime walk loudly counting those he saw, until both he and Mr Stone burst out laughing’ (p. 90).¹⁵ Earls Court, the most particularized area of London in the novel, is disquieting – ‘a disreputable, overcrowded area Mr Stone had always thought it’ (p. 26) – precisely because of the traffic between architectural and street space, because the boarding-houses and hotels that fill the area have to declare themselves, however discreetly – ‘A small

typewritten "Europeans Only" card below the bell proclaimed it a refuge of respectability and calm' (p. 26) – in relation to the streets' mix of classes and colours and their evidence of resistance and counter-resistance to social change, with British National Party members sharing pavement space with what are described as 'foreigners of every colour' (p. 26).

Just as Stone evades the particularities of his environment (except as they directly affect his domestic arrangements) so he ostensibly evades engagement with a sense of history and tradition, the possibility of which manifests itself in a liminal moment comparable with the point in medieval romance that signals the beginning of adventure. On holiday in Cornwall, attempted engagement with the domestic displaced in time and history on a visit to an abandoned Iron Age settlement prompts a feeling of depression and mild panic, compounded by an uncanny hallucination which gives Mr Stone intimations of mortality: disoriented, husband and wife encounter a strange wild-looking man who seems to be both threat and guide, a figure who has a more grotesque analogue in Chrétien de Troyes's twelfth-century romance, *Yvain*, in the figure of the anomalous wildman cattleherd who directs hopeful knights to the site of chivalric adventure.¹⁶ Stone finds himself experiencing a 'hallucinatory moment', 'an experience of nothingness' (p. 50). After this, the narrator tells us briskly, 'They decided to give the Cornwall of legend a miss' (p. 50). But this experience is as formative of Mr Stone's arrival at his benevolent scheme as is another, an anxious response to which places him precisely in his time; the vision of a recently retired man propped up by two women in the teashop to which they repair after a walk, a premonition to Stone of his own possible future condition, supported by 'female keepers' who collude in a social idea of his masculine importance. The uncomfortable dynamics of male-female relations throughout the novel, primarily involving a male rueful awareness of incapacity, but at the same time self-aggrandizement, coupled with a resentment of the female, who both colludes with and supports these structures, invite analysis as replications of power-structures between colonizer and colonized.

Stone's idea for a selfless organization is not then altruistic at root, nor does it embody some ideologically pure stance that Whympers proceeds to pollute with his cynical manipulation of cheap theatrical 'Arthurian'-inspired tricks: rather, the two are interdependent. The deployment of Arthurian allusions reveals something of the continuing evolution of 'English' culture, and how contemporary and recurrent concerns in fact constitute the mythical subject: here it pragmatically reflects male anxieties and aspirations, and serves as replication of masculine social, militarized, structures. The co-option of Arthurian legend to portray anxious masculinity, together with the narratorial invocations of springtime, aligns the novel in part with Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Through formal literary and thematic echoes, the novella uses the Arthurian legend to replicate some of the anxieties other literature in English recognizes as fundamental to the myth itself.

Felicity Riddy has recently suggested that Thomas Malory's *Morte* is a 'post-imperial, or even post-colonial text', in that it speaks to the concerns of those English gentry dispossessed of French territories in 1453.¹⁷ This needs some qualification, in that the questions of the interrelation of writings in French and in English on Arthurian subjects in multilingual late-medieval British culture are different from those surrounding Naipaul's cultural situation. But each author, whose works belong to a continuity of English writing that uses the Arthurian to interrogate rather than to confirm, attempts to register a sense of cultural displacement through the very process of engaging with the Arthurian: so for both the Arthurian functions as a paradoxical space. This 'paradoxical space' has metatextual poignancy, for Naipaul's characters as for their author: Mr Stone's programme can be read as an attempt, like Arthurian adventure in general and Malory in particular, to defer the inevitable end, the death and the departure of the fellowship of Round Table knights, to which the title of Malory's Arthurian work draws attention, even as the narrative attempts a continuing series of chivalric adventures.¹⁸ Dynamism as well as closure is of course inherent in Arthurian narrative: just as the Round Table facilitates ever more medieval Arthurian tales, so for Mr and Mrs Stone, the association of Knights Companion generates ever more anecdotes: 'They had thought their life's store of stories completed; now they had the joy of acquiring new stories almost every week' (p. 77).

The society Stone envisages is one that in his mind reproduces familiar structures: he wants to preserve for men the 'comradeship of the office, which released them from the confinement of family relationships' (p. 66). (This is in fact close to the homosocial project of the Round Table as thirteenth-century romance imagines and describes it.¹⁹) Office organization itself replicates other male social structures, recalled by, or noted in the behaviour of, other Excal employees, from the humiliations of National Service to the institutionalized bullying of public school life. The Knights Companion replicate a displaced militarism, part of the undercurrent of military imagery that haunts the book, largely in 'throwaway' details: dinner party guests position themselves 'like participants in some form of combat' (p. 39); the 'wild man of Cornwall wears 'a tattered, unbuttoned army tunic' (p. 49); Mr Stone's imagination sees Chelsea pensioners knocking at doors of Olde Englishe country cottages as he dreams up his scheme, and indulges a filmic fantasy of being a general co-ordinating troops, in his real-life office with its pseudo-military operations board and mapping flags (p. 64). (And puns, and the decorum of puns, are of continuing concern throughout the novel; there is a moral aspect to Whympers's delight in doing violence to and with words.)

The little badge Whympers has fashioned for the Knights Companion is of a knight charging at full tilt, but Whympers recognizes the vulnerability of the members of what he calls 'A society ... for the protection of the impotent male' (p. 66). This vulnerability has been read as anti-romance (the knight

should be doing the protecting²⁰), as in the episode in which the scheme rescues a poor soul from unfortunate domestic circumstances. But Naipaul here exposes the Round Table's potential as a legitimizing exercise for the expression of a beleaguered masculinity, whether that masculinity feels itself threatened by the feminine, or by other male violence. He has translated into modern terms the paradox at the heart of Malory's project, where violence, the foundation of Arthurian society, is both the expression of hatred and of 'fellowship', and the Round Table, supposedly based on equality, is sustainable only through a rigid hierarchization of knighthood (so chivalric identity in effect depends on the exercise of violence upon others' bodies). Comically, the Knights Companion also have to acknowledge hierarchy: they have to scrap the 'fixed gift allowance' in favour of a 'sliding scale' (p. 75) that awards more handsome presents to those who in their careers attained higher rank in the company, in order to avoid social embarrassment.²¹

Naipaul's use of the topos of the change of seasons, but particularly of springtime, invites comparison with Malory, in that each writer uses it to problematize rather than synchronize a relation between the 'natural' and lived human systems. In a passage towards the end of the *Morte*, one which has been read as uncharacteristic, Malory's narrator compares the coming of spring with renewal of the memory of love and chivalry, and makes the reader responsible for maintaining an ideology that the Arthurian narrative itself, upon examination, does not necessarily support.²² Naipaul's invocation of Spring is partly analogous to Malory's in its lack of fit between the ageing Mr Stone and the continuing renewal of the seasons and their cultural resonances, although Stone's experience ultimately finds more optimistic resolution than does that of Malory's readers.

In the novel, a spatial harmony, and a temporal harmony, in the sense that Stone is never drawn into replicating the tragic aspects of the Arthurian, mirror the coming to terms with writing and with an English tradition that constitute the composition of the book: the city's spaces are finally linked together at the novel's conclusion, when Stone, obliged to walk part of the way home because of a transport strike, goes along the Embankment and across the river to Brixton. It is at this point that London is described as having a 'warm heart', its life the continual flow of people into and out of its centre; that Brixton's 'crowds of black and white' are described without qualifying adjectives, and that Stone achieves a kind of peace (p. 125). I want to suggest then that a central focus in *Mr Stone*, both as concerns the city and literature, is not, *pace* John Thieme, 'a betrayal ... of the mythic imagination',²³ nor yet, ultimately, a cultural betrayal. Rather, Naipaul's engagement is with disillusion and anxieties inherent in canonical English Arthurian literature. His work recognizes the ultimate lack of an 'originary' Arthurian myth, but *Mr Stone* also gladly participates in that flawed mythologizing which it has in common with the literature on which it depends.

NOTES

1. V.S. Naipaul, 'Prologue to an Autobiography', in *Finding the Centre: Two Narratives* (London: André Deutsch, 1984), p. 18.
2. V.S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 25. On this and other literary and cultural resonances, see Shirley Chew, '(Post)colonial Translations in V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*', in *Translating Life: Studies in Transpositional Aesthetics*, ed. Shirley Chew and Alistair Stead (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), pp. 137-159.
3. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, third edn, ed. by Eugène Vinaver, revd by P.J.C. Field, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990): 'the cité of Camelot, that ys in Englysh called Wynchester' (I, 92).
4. Helen Hayward, for example, in 'Tradition, Innovation, and the Representation of England in V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*', *JCL*, 32.2 (1997), pp. 51-65, quotes (p. 54) a Notebook containing an early draft of the *Enigma*, in the V.S. Naipaul Archive, II, 14:1, Special Collections, McFarlin Library, Tulsa: 'These literary influences constantly came to me in England; they came between me and what I saw.' This suggests that the literary echoes are unwished for, but Hayward concludes that the published work 'articulates a condition of ambivalence, and exemplifies ... cultural dislocation' (p. 63). On Naipaul as working to undo 'settled notions of Englishness' by means of a 'discourse of fracture and decay', see W. John Walker, 'Unsettling the Sign: V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*', *JCL*, 32.2 (1997), pp. 67-84 (p. 70).
5. Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 20. Grateful thanks to John McLeod for drawing my attention to this book and other bibliography on the post-colonial.
6. Interview with Roy Plomley, 'Desert Island Discs', BBC Radio 4, 5 July 1980, cited by John Thieme, 'Naipaul's English Fable: *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 30 (1984), pp. 497-503 (p. 498).
7. *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights: From the Winchester Manuscripts of Sir Thomas Malory and Other Sources*, ed. by Chase Horton (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976), p. xi.
8. V.S. Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* (London: André Deutsch, 1964), pp. 207-8, cited by Landeg White, *V.S. Naipaul: A Critical Introduction* (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 133.
9. Elizabeth Grosz, 'Bodies-Cities', in *Sexuality and Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), pp. 241-53 (p. 248). See also Jonathan Raban, *Soft City* (London: Harvill/ Harper Collins, 1974), pp. 9-10, on the resistance and plasticity of the city in response to the construction of individual identity.
10. V.S. Naipaul, *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963). All further references are to this edition and are included in the text.
11. 'From room to room I moved, from district to district, going ever farther out of the heart of the city.' *The Mimic Men* (London: André Deutsch, 1967), pp. 35-6.
12. David Dabydeen, 'On Cultural Diversity', in *Whose Cities*, ed. by Mark Fisher and Ursula Owen (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), pp. 97-106.
13. See also p. 72, where Stone is disappointed, in spite of his own experience, that his newly recruited office staff do not resemble the charming creatures of 'films and cartoons'.
14. Contrast this with the kind of treatment of Piccadilly Circus we see in Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (Harlow: Longman, 1956), where the heart of the city is the occasion and subject for long disquisition on the nature of the capital

- and the ambitions and enthusiastic engagement of its immigrant inhabitants with what it is to be in London. Selvon differs also in his invocation of the Arthurian: it is an adventurous and far-from-chaste post-colonial remaking his world, for whom the very streetnames of London are 'big romance' (p. 84), who earns the name 'Galahad'.
15. Whympers's 'tolerance level' of white Europeans is higher than that of his older colleague. While Whympers will defend a Polish office worker, for example, Stone is vehement in his 'hatred' of the Dutch walker he meets on holiday: 'the blushing little mute in soft colours he hated most of all' (p. 55).
 16. See *Yvain*, in *Chrétien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances*, tr. D.D.R. Owen (London: Dent, 1993), pp. 281-373. This character, with 'a head larger than that of a pack-horse ... great mossy ears like an elephant's, heavy eyebrows, and a flat face with owl's eyes and a nose like a cat's', dressed in skins, appears ingenuous but is more aware than are the knights who seek adventure: 'I don't know anything about adventure and never heard tell of it [he tells Calogrenant]. But if you wanted to go to a spring not far from here, you wouldn't get back again easily if you followed the proper custom there.' (pp. 284-86).
 17. Felicity Riddy, 'Contextualizing *Le Morte Darthur*: Empire and Civil War', in *A Companion to Malory*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and A.S.G. Edwards (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996), pp. 55-73 (p. 71).
 18. For the technique of deferral in Malory, see, for example, Andrew Lynch, *Malory's Book of Arms* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), *passim*. French Arthurian prose romance tends more towards defining for Arthur a complete historical world, and the later medieval prose works especially are more interested in closure than is Malory: see Richard Trachsler, *Clôtures du cycle arthurien* (Geneva: Droz, 1996).
 19. The account in the French Prose *Merlin*, part of the most popular ('Vulgate') cycle of Arthurian romance, tells of how, when knights arrive at the Round Table Merlin institutes, they are loath to leave: 'And yet we wonder ... For many of us have no bonds with any among us; others have not seen one other before, and few of us were friends before. And now we all love one other as much as a son should love his father, or more, and it does not seem to us that we will ever be parted unless it is by death.' *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, gen. ed. Norris J. Lacy, 5 vols (New York: Garland, 1992-6), I (1992), p. 197.
 20. John Thieme, 'Naipaul's English Fable', p. 502.
 21. It is also perhaps relevant that the Round Table, in its manifestation at the first Annual Dinner Whympers organizes (p. 95), is in the shape of a horseshoe, and that Whympers translates the romance decorum of the 'byrd [lady] in the bower' into a sequestering of the spouses who turn up to the Dinner uninvited (p. 94).
 22. Malory, *Works*, III, 1119-20. For a brief assessment of critical response to the passage, see C. David Benson, 'The Ending of the *Morte Darthur*', in *A Companion to Malory*, pp. 221-38 (p. 227). The argument that the narratorial invocation of spring is in fact paradigmatic of the *Morte's* method forms part of a broader study of Malory I am currently working on.
 23. 'Naipaul's English Fable', p. 502.